



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

## **"No Encores" The Royal Dublin Society Concert Archive Recitals in Retrospect: 1925-50**

O'Hanlon, T. (2015). "No Encores" The Royal Dublin Society Concert Archive Recitals in Retrospect: 1925-50. *Brio*, 52(2), 7-29.

**Published in:**  
Brio

**Document Version:**  
Peer reviewed version

**Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**  
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

**Publisher rights**  
Copyright 2015 IAML & Triona O'Hanlon.

**General rights**  
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**  
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact [openaccess@qub.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@qub.ac.uk).

**NO ENCORES”**  
**THE ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY CONCERT ARCHIVE**  
**RECITALS IN RETROSPECT: 1925–50**

*Triona O’Hanlon*

The Royal Dublin Society (RDS) was founded in 1731 to improve and promote agriculture, arts, industry and science in Ireland and during its early days it was called ‘The Dublin Society for improving Husbandry, Manufactures and other Useful Arts’. Over the course of three centuries the Society has been based at several Dublin premises. Early meetings took place in the Philosophical Rooms at Trinity College (1731) and in rooms at Parliament House (1731–38/9[?]). During the late eighteenth century the Society acquired property on Grafton Street, Poolbeg Street and Hawkins Street. It was based at Leinster House for over a century (1815–1922) and the move to the current site at Ballsbridge began during the late 1800s.<sup>1</sup> Admission to the Royal Dublin Society was by election and the subsequent payment of a membership fee which permitted use of the Society’s facilities and attendance at Society events.<sup>2</sup> There were different types of membership; annual, life, lady, scientific associates and honorary. Annual members paid a subscription fee of £2 2s. The society was extremely popular and in 1927 membership was limited to 9,000; 8,000 annual members and 1,000 life

---

<sup>1</sup> Further details on the history can be found in Henry F. Berry, *A History of The Royal Dublin Society* (London: 1915), and in James Meenan and Desmond Clarke, *The Royal Dublin Society 1731–1981* (Dublin: 1981). See also the Society’s website at <http://www.rds.ie/>. The founders were Judge Michael Ward (1683–1759), a member of the Irish Parliament for County Down (1715) and Justice of the King’s Bench (1727–59); Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661–1733), who studied medicine and was President of the Irish College of Physicians; Arthur Dobbs (1689–1765), a member of Irish Parliament for Carrickfergus (1727–60); Dr William Stephens (c1684–1760), a physicist and physician attached to the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham and physician to Mercer’s and Steven’s Hospitals; Dr Francis LeHunte (c1686–1750), a doctor and a Member of Parliament; Richard Warburton (1674–1747), a member of Irish Parliament, John Pratt (1670–1741) and Jacob Walton (d.1743) who were described as landowners; Colonel Thomas Upton (1671–1733), a Member of Parliament; Dr Alexander Magnaten [MacNaghton], a physician; Rev. John Madden (1690–1751), vicar of St Ann’s and later Dean of Kilmore; Rev. Dr. John Whitcomb (d.1769), a Fellow of Trinity College (1720 and later Bishop of Clonfert (1735), Bishop of Down and Connor and Archbishop of Cashel (1752); Thomas Prior (1681–1751), a lawyer; and William Maple (c1661–1762), a chemist and Keeper of Parliament House.

<sup>2</sup> Membership lists for the following years are extant: 1925, 1927, 1929, 1930–31, 1936, 1941–42, 1946 and 1950. They record the name, address and year in which the person became a member of the RDS. During the years 1929 to 1931 the membership fee was subject to a tax. Affixed inside the front cover of Membership Lists for the years 1929–31 is the following note: “LIFE MEMBERSHIP / Annual Members may now compound for all future subscription as follows:- / Members who have paid Five or more Annual Subscription Twenty Guineas. Tax 9s. / Members who have paid Ten or more Annual Subscription Fifteen Guineas Tax 7s. / Members who have paid Fifteen or more Annual Subscription Ten Guineas Tax 5s. / Members who have paid Twenty or more Annual Subscription Five Guineas. Tax 3s. / EXTRACT FROM THE BY-LAWS. — The Subscription of an Annual Member shall be Two Guineas, together with any tax payable thereon under Act of Parliament, payable in advance on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January in each year, and every member shall be liable for payment on that date unless a written notice of his intention to resign shall have been sent to the Registrar prior thereto.”

members.<sup>3</sup> RDS members were resident throughout Ireland (north and south), the majority within county Dublin, however some members resided in the UK, Switzerland and the USA. Members included medical doctors, army men, clergymen, judges, professors, members of government, consuls-general to countries including France, Spain, America, Germany and The Netherlands. Honorary members included presidents and secretaries of various agricultural, scientific and arts societies in the UK, for example President and Secretaries of the Royal Society, President of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, President of the Royal Academy of Arts, London and Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. Slight decreases in membership are recorded for the years 1934 and 1939; reasons given in the Society's annual reports include the economic conditions and the outbreak of the Second World War respectively.<sup>4</sup> Membership was well maintained as vacancies which arose following deaths or resignations were quickly filled by the election of new members.<sup>5</sup>

In 1886 the Society established a series of recitals in order to promote chamber music and to expose Dublin audiences to the works of the great composers.<sup>6</sup> One hundred and twenty years (1886–2006) of recitals are recorded in sources extant in the RDS Library and Archives, which is located at the Society's current premises. Extant in the collection are minute books; autographed programmes; newspaper cuttings which include previews, reviews and advertisements; correspondence with performers and agents; promotional material; selections of photographs; records of attendance, performers' fees and takings; and hundreds of volumes of printed music. A large portion of the RDS archive has been donated by its members. This article documents the organisation, management and occurrence of the RDS classical music recitals for the period 1925 to 1950, encompassing the opening of the current concert hall (The Members' Hall, 1925), the Society's bi-centenary celebrations (1931) and the continuance of the recitals within the context of the Second World War (1939–45). The archive documents Dublin appearances by internationally renowned musicians and first Dublin performances of several twentieth-century works. Networks, repertoire and reception are also examined.

---

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Council for the year 1927, Ref. ARC 062 RDS, p. 5. All copies of Reports of the Council have the reference number ARC 062 RDS. Extant reports relevant to the period examined in this research are bound in four volumes; 1925–30, 1931–37, 1938–44 and 1945–51.

<sup>4</sup> Report Council 1934, p. 5; 1939, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> In 1947 a membership waiting list was established in order to facilitate oversubscription to the Society, see Report Council 1947, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Meenan and Clarke, *Royal Dublin Society*, pp. 265–77.

## The Concert Hall

The earliest RDS recitals, which took place during the 1880s, were held in the Society's Lecture Theatre at Leinster House. They were subsequently held in the Abbey Theatre and the Theatre Royal.<sup>7</sup> The current concert hall, previously known as the Art and Industries Hall, was converted during the 1920s. Plans were prepared by the Architects O'Callaghan and Webb and the building work was completed by Collen Bros, whose archives are now housed at the Manuscripts and Archives Research Library at Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>8</sup> Also known as the Members' Hall, the venue was ready in time for the 1925/6 season of recitals. With a capacity of 1,500 the Society's music committee was in no doubt about the suitability of the hall for chamber music recitals.<sup>9</sup> Proceedings for the year 1925 record the following:

“The success of the Hall for the purpose of Chamber Music was at once assured; its acoustic properties proved to be remarkably good, the heating and ventilation was also acknowledged to be most satisfactory while the seating accommodation – small collapsible chairs – provided as a temporary measure, was so successful that it is likely to be adopted permanently.

To provide for the growing attendances at the Recitals a further 500 chairs were purchased by the Headquarters Committee.”<sup>10</sup>

The concert hall did not always prove to be completely satisfactory however. The seats were found to be uncomfortable by some, difficulties were experienced in heating the venue during the winter months and the ventilation system also caused problems.<sup>11</sup> All these issues were resolved before the 1936/7 season.<sup>12</sup> The concert hall also housed the Society's library, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Herbert W. South, 'Royal Dublin Society Chamber Music Recitals', in *Music in Ireland A Symposium*, ed. Aloys Fleischmann (Cork: 1952), pp. 285–9; Meenan and Clarke, *Royal Dublin Society*, p. 73; Michael Dervan, 'Royal Dublin Society', in *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, eds. Harry White and Barra Boydell, vol. 2 (Dublin: UCD Press, 2013), p. 898.

<sup>8</sup> Report Council 1925, pp. 6–7. The Collen Brothers Archive MS 11482. See also [http://www.collen.com/200\\_years/New\\_Frontage\\_of\\_the\\_Royal\\_Dublin\\_Society.aspx](http://www.collen.com/200_years/New_Frontage_of_the_Royal_Dublin_Society.aspx). and *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720–1940* at <http://www.dia.ie>.

<sup>9</sup> A letter from the RDS Registrar Horace Poole to the Performing Rights Society, dated 4 October 1949, states that the concert hall has a capacity of 1,300 (Box RDS/MUS/6). The archive includes a number of boxes which contain letters, receipts, telegraphs, programmes, calendars for recital seasons, tickets and miscellaneous papers.

<sup>10</sup> Report Council 1925, pp. 36–7.

<sup>11</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume dated 1928–32, newspaper cuttings *Irish Times* 4, 7 and 11 February 1929, and 4 November 1930; Report Council 1936, pp. 55–6; ARC RDS/MAN/MUS Minutes of the Royal Dublin Society Music Committee, 14 May 1931–20 December 1939, f. 29v, Meeting 11 March 1936; ARC RDS/MAN/MUS Music Committee Minute Book 1934–73, f. 7v, Meeting 7 April 1936.

<sup>12</sup> During the 1929/30 season the uncomfortable seating became a bone of contention between the *Irish Times* music critic, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Obbligato', and Edward Bohane, the director of the RDS. The following complaint was published in the *Irish Times* dated 4 February 1929: “Alas! On such occasions, however seized one may be with the artistic import of the music, the peculiar hardness of the seats in the Ballsbridge hall is apt to intrude itself on one's attention. Something is wrong in the design of the seats. They are most uncomfortable; half the people who attend these recitals complain openly, and the rest fidget in silence. There will be a revolt of the musical members of the Society if no change has been effected by the opening of

the dual use of this space created problems in terms of planning recitals and accessibility. The concert hall was redecorated in 1944, and in 1965 the library relocated to a designated space adjoining the hall.<sup>13</sup> Extant letters exchanged between the RDS Registrar Horace Poole and the Performing Rights Society demonstrate that between September and October 1949 issues arose regarding licensing. The letters record a revision of charges applied to halls used, let or loaned for entertainment, including music. The revision of charges and the termination, negotiation and renewal of the RDS's entertainment licence are also documented in the letters.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Music Committee**

The Society was governed by a Council which included a president, vice-president(s), governors, honorary secretaries and representative members.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of dedicated committees facilitated the continued development of the Society's programmes and initiatives (Committee of Agriculture, Committee of Science and its Industrial Applications and the Industries, Art and General Purposes Committee). The organisation and management of the chamber music recitals was the responsibility of a dedicated music committee which was a sub-committee of the Industries, Art and General Purposes Committee. The music committee was re-appointed annually in December and included a chairman and vice-chairman, six representatives of the General Purposes Committee and five additional members of the Society, who were required to have knowledge of classical music. The chairman and vice-chairman were appointed annually and could not hold office for more than three years in succession. Representative and additional members could not serve on the music committee for more than five consecutive years.<sup>16</sup>

The music committee met between two and ten times each year. Most meetings took place in the months leading up to and during the recital season. Committee members were responsible for engaging performers, communicating with agents and negotiating fees. They also made significant decisions about the repertoire performed, collaborating with agents and

---

next season." (Box MUS/13 Volume dated 1928–32, newspaper cuttings *Irish Times* 4 February 1929 and 4 November 1930, and *Irish Independent* 4 November 1930; Report Council 1936, pp. 55–6; Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 29v, Meeting 11 March 1936; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 7v Meeting 7 April 1936.

<sup>13</sup> Report Council 1944, p. 5; Meenan and Clarke, *Royal Dublin Society*, pp. 85–7.

<sup>14</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 see letters dated 29 September and 4 October 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Representative members from the various committees established by the Society were appointed to the Council. Members from the three main committees appear to have been appointed as representative members to various sub-committees.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73 contains a copy of the regulations for the appointment of the music committee.

performers in order to avoid the over repetition of works, thus ensuring audiences were presented with varied and interesting programmes.<sup>17</sup> The committee was very conscious of the duration of the programmes, which were not to exceed 70 minutes of ‘actual’ music, and they required performers to submit timings with their suggested programmes.<sup>18</sup> The committee frequently received letters from RDS members suggesting performers and/or programmes for upcoming recitals.<sup>19</sup>

The music committee was frequently required to make the necessary arrangements for piano hire.<sup>20</sup> The preferred models were Steinway, Bechstein and Blüthner, which were supplied to the Society by Pigott or McCullough,<sup>21</sup> although on occasion performers made their own arrangements for piano hire. A selection of extant contracts dating from November 1926 to February 1927 clearly shows the occasions on which this task was the responsibility of the RDS.<sup>22</sup> Performers frequently requested that acknowledgements of piano makers and/or suppliers were included in all printed material. This is evidenced in several programmes dating from the period 1931–43 which are extant in the collection.<sup>23</sup> There is no record that the Society considered buying a piano until the late 1940s; at a meeting of the music committee on 2 April 1947 it was decided that:

“[...] this Committee [the music committee] was unanimously of the opinion that it is essential that the Society should possess its own piano, and that the sanction of the Council be sought for its purchase at a future date when a favourable opportunity for the purchase should arise, at a cost not exceeding £1,000. The Registrar was further instructed to prepare for the Chairman’s signature a formal recommendation to this effect for submission to the General Purposes Committee and to the Council”.<sup>24</sup>

Between December 1947 and August 1949 the music committee was in contact with instrument dealers McCullough’s about purchasing a piano and gave serious consideration to the opportunity to acquire a Steinway grand.<sup>25</sup> In the end it was decided not to go ahead for the following reasons; the committee felt that they could not approach the government for the

---

<sup>17</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 and Box MUS/10 contents relating to the years 1922–28; Minutes Music 1931–39; Minutes Music 1934–73.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 24r.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 7v–8r, 14v–15r, 32v–33r; 1934–73, f. 9r.

<sup>20</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 and Box MUS/10; Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 24r; 1934–73, ff. 1v, 2r, 7v, 26v.

<sup>21</sup> Pigott and McCullough amalgamated in 1967–68, see Lisa Parker, ‘Pigott & Co’ in *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, eds. Harry White and Barra Boydell, vol. 2 (Dublin: UCD Press, 2013), p. 840.

<sup>22</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 see folder containing 25 contracts for various performers engaged for the 1926/7 and 1927/8 recital seasons.

<sup>23</sup> RDS Musical Programmes 1931–43 Ref. ARC RDS/MAN/MUS.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 32v.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 32v, 34v, 35v, 39r; ARC RDS/MAN ART Royal Dublin Society Committee of Industries, Art and General Purposes Agenda Period 7/4/1925 to 9/5/1929, ff. 136v–137r.

amount required to purchase a new Steinway, the committee lacked confidence in pianos made in post-war Germany, the cost of upkeep and insurance was a consideration and it was felt that the purchase of a piano was a risk considering the fact that some performers received commission for using particular instruments.<sup>26</sup>

Warm hospitality was shown to performers, who were frequently invited to socialise with members of the music committee and members of the Society in the private tea rooms after recitals.<sup>27</sup> Performers were provided with accommodation by Miss [Alice] Griffith (fl. c1931–57), who joined the music committee in 1934. Extant in the archives is a guest-book for the period February 1931 to December 1957, which was presented to the Society in 1978 by a Miss M. Griffith, presumably a relative. The signatures and addresses of performers who participated in RDS recitals during this period (1931–57) are contained therein. The name Agnes Harty (1876/7–1959), soprano of repute and wife of Sir Hamilton Harty (1879–1941), frequently appears in the guest-book.<sup>28</sup> Members of the music committee also assisted performers during recitals by taking on the role of page turner.<sup>29</sup>

## **The Recitals**

The RDS recital season ran from November to February with a break of approximately three weeks over the Christmas period. Two recitals took place every Monday during the season, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The committee decided to introduce evening recitals during the 1925/6 season, in order to facilitate an increase in membership and to facilitate those who were unable to attend in the afternoons.<sup>30</sup> Admission was primarily for RDS members who in return for payment of their subscription (£2 2s) were admitted free to all recitals.<sup>31</sup> Members were issued with a series of tickets which permitted admission to one

---

<sup>26</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 see note dated 12 June 1949; letters from McCullough's to the Registrar of the RDS dated 5 and 8 July 1949; letter from Registrar of RDS to McCullough's dated 11 July 1949; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 39r Meeting dated 10 August 1949.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 22; see also Musical Programmes 1931–43; notes recorded by Edith Boxwell.

<sup>28</sup> Report Council 1942, p. 52; 1943, p. 47; 1944, p. 47; ARC RDS/MAN/MUS Guestbook 1931–57; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 3v.

<sup>29</sup> Report Council 1931, pp. 58–9; 1932, p. 60; 1933, p. 57; 1934, p. 53; 1935, p. 53; 1936, p. 55; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 34v.

<sup>30</sup> The Report of the Council for 1925 records that more than 1,300 new members were elected during the first three weeks of November, see Report Council 1925, pp. 37–8.

<sup>31</sup> Report Council 1928, p. 5.

recital only, afternoon or evening, but not both.<sup>32</sup> They could invite friends on payment of five shillings for a single recital. In December 1945 the committee decided to limit to 150 the number of tickets sold to non-members.<sup>33</sup> The admission of students and members' children was encouraged and in 1938 a motion was passed by the committee allowing members to bring their children to recitals on purchase of a reduced rate ticket. This applied to children under the age of seventeen, who were admitted at a fee of two shillings,<sup>34</sup> and special concessions were granted to music students who could also obtain tickets at the same price.<sup>35</sup> An extant ticket register for the period 1949–55 appears to document the number and type of tickets printed and issued, and the number of remaining tickets for recitals during this period.<sup>36</sup>

The afternoon recitals took place at 4 p.m. and the evening recitals at 8.15 p.m.<sup>37</sup> In 1927 the time of the afternoon recitals was changed to 3 p.m. to avoid the disruption caused by members of the audience leaving early.<sup>38</sup> The habit of leaving early, presumably in order to get transport home, appears to have been the culture for many RDS recital goers and resulted in disrupting many performances. The music committee felt it necessary to insert various notes in programmes requesting audience members to refrain from disrupting performances, specifically mentioning disruption caused by leaving early, reserving vacant chairs, applauding between movements and knitting during performances.<sup>39</sup> The apparent clatter of

---

<sup>32</sup> Report Council 1925, pp. 36–8; 1926, p. 40; 1927, p. 36. A printed calendar for the 1926/7 season is extant in Box MUS/10. The calendar records: "The Recitals of Classical Music on Mondays will be given both in the Afternoon and Evening. Members' Special Admission Tickets. Members will please note that a special admission Ticket must be handed up at the entrance whenever admission to a Recital is desired – a series of these admission Tickets to the end of the year is enclosed – each ticket enables a Member to attend one Recital, afternoon or evening, on the date stated on it. Tickets for the Recitals in the new year will be posted to Life Members at the end of December, and Issued to Annual Members on payment of their subscriptions for 1927. It is hoped that it may be found possible by those resident in the vicinity of Ball's Bridge [sic] to avail themselves of the Evening Recitals, and thereby assist in accommodating at the Afternoon Recitals those who are unable on account of distance to attend in the evening."

<sup>33</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 29v–30r.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 37v. This motion was brought for consideration to the Industries Art and General Purposes Committee.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 32v, 34r, 42v, Meeting dated 2 April 1947.

<sup>36</sup> RDS ARC TIC/MAN 2 Ticket Register for RDS shows, lectures and recitals for the years 1949–55.

<sup>37</sup> Report Council 1925, p. 36. Recital times changed from 3p.m. and 8.15p.m. to 2p.m. and 5p.m. in order to accommodate British pianist Benno Moiseiwitch (1890–1963).

<sup>38</sup> Report Council 1927, p. 43; Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37, Review of Pro Arte recital of 5 February 1934 reviewed in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* 6 February 1934; BOX MUS/13 Volume 1937–40, Review of Catterall Quartet published in the *Irish Times* 25 January 1938. Box MUS/10 Report on Chamber Music Recitals – content appears to post date 1926: "As many members living at a distance from Dublin are frequently obliged to leave the Recital before the conclusion of the programme to catch trains etc. the committee have under consideration the desirability of altering the hour of the afternoon recitals from 4 o'clock to 3 o'clock."

<sup>39</sup> See various programmes in the following: Musical Programmes 1931–43, 1943–48 and 1949–56 (all volumes Ref. ARC RDS/MAN/MUS); Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 30r; 1934–73, ff. 4v, 7v, 26v, 39v. See also loose



busy knitting needles proved to be most disruptive, meriting reference in newspaper reviews published in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* during both the 1934 and 1936 seasons.<sup>40</sup>

On occasion recital start times were altered to accommodate performers and their travel arrangements. Extant sources for 1926 and 1927 document in detail the arrangements made by the RDS on behalf of the Hallé Orchestra to delay the British and Irish Steampacket Co. steamer from Dublin to Liverpool in order to accommodate the orchestra's return trip.<sup>41</sup> In November 1942 the evening recitals changed from 8.15 p.m. to 8 p.m. and in November 1943 they changed again, to begin at 7.30 p.m.<sup>42</sup> This earlier time was presumably chosen in order to work around difficulties experienced with transport and travelling after dark during wartime. During this period the words "No Encores" were printed on programmes, to avoid delay at the end of recitals, thus facilitating audience members in getting home earlier.<sup>43</sup> The 8 p.m. start time resumed in November 1946.<sup>44</sup>

From 1925 to 1935 between 19 and 28 recitals took place each year, and from 1936 to 1950 a total of 24 recitals were held annually. The Society made very little profit from the recitals largely due to the fact that members were admitted free of charge.<sup>45</sup> The small profits accrued were offset against expenses which included performers' fees, the cost of printing, advertising, wages, piano hire, performing rights fees and sundries.<sup>46</sup> Records show that from 1929 the music committee drafted budget estimates, carefully planning expected costs and receipts.<sup>47</sup> Abstracts of accounts published in the Society's proceedings clearly record the income and expenditure associated with the music recitals.<sup>48</sup> The only source of income was that accrued from ticket sales, and up to and including the year 1931, income from ticket

---

programme for piano recital by English pianist Cutner Solomon (1902–88) dated 15 November 1926 in Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37.

<sup>40</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37, newspaper cutting from *Irish Independent*, 11/12 February 1934; cuttings from *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* dated 3 November 1936.

<sup>41</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 Letters from Olive Baguley, Secretary of the Hallé Concert Society, to Arthur Moran, Registrar of the RDS, 1927; Report Council 1926, p. 40; 1927, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Musical Programmes 1931–43; RDS Musical Programmes 1943–48.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 21v.

<sup>44</sup> Musical Programmes 1943–48.

<sup>45</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 letter 9 April 1927 from E.A. Michell to Arthur Moran. Draft of reply in black ink on reverse (presumably in Moran's hand) cited here: "[...] As explained to you a few years ago our members have the right to free admission to all our recitals and though we have large attendances the actual receipts are very small – our season usually results in a debit balance about £800 [...]"

<sup>46</sup> Pre 1925 expenses also included rent for use of the Theatre Royal, see Report Council 1926, p. 16; Performing rights fees were introduced in 1938, see Report Council 1938, p. 10. See all Reports Council 1938–50.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes.

<sup>48</sup> Reports Council 1925–50.

sales was subject to an entertainments' tax.<sup>49</sup> The greatest annual expenditure (£2,329) was recorded in 1926. A total of 27 recitals took place that year including performances by members of the Hallé Orchestra (Hamilton Harty's Chamber Orchestra), which requested a fee of £160.<sup>50</sup> The highest income from ticket sales (£641 2s) was recorded in 1927, and can be attributed to the growing popularity of the recitals, a return visit by the ever popular Hallé Orchestra under the baton of Sir Hamilton Harty, and two special recitals organised to celebrate St Patrick's Day for which a special reservation fee was charged to all members.<sup>51</sup> Two special recitals given by the Hallé Orchestra in October 1927 also incurred an extra charge to members; a reserved seat in the centre of the hall cost five shillings and a reserved seat in the side aisles cost 2s 6d. The extra charge to members was implemented in order to cover the cost of engaging the orchestra.<sup>52</sup>

Not surprisingly decreases in both income and expenditure are evident during the years of the Second World War (1939–45). The full series of 24 recitals continued throughout this period; £78 1s was received from ticket sales in 1940, and expenses recorded in 1941 amounted to £673. By the year 1942 figures for both income and expenditure began to increase again.<sup>53</sup> At a meeting of the music committee which took place in July 1940 the decision was made to continue holding both afternoon and evening recitals during the war years on the basis that if it was necessary to cancel an evening recital one third of the fee offered to performers was retained by the committee.<sup>54</sup> Prior to this arrangement, in September 1939, the committee had made contact with agents and performers requesting a revision of fees due to the crisis arising from the occurrence of the War.<sup>55</sup>

Performers' fees averaged within the range of £30 or 30 guineas to £80 or 80 guineas, with some performers requesting fees of up to £100 or 100 guineas.<sup>56</sup> The fees often requested by

---

<sup>49</sup> Reports Council 1925–31.

<sup>50</sup> See Hallé Orchestra in Music Recitals' Index 1925–93 in Box RDS/MUS/6; Report Council 1926, pp. 18–19, 35–9.

<sup>51</sup> Report Council 1927, pp. 36–42. A programme for the 1927 Special St Patrick's Day recitals is extant in the collection see contents of Box RDS/MUS/6. The extra charge incurred for the St Patrick's Day recitals is not recorded in extant sources.

<sup>52</sup> Report Council 1927, p. 41. Draft (incomplete) of advertisements for Hallé Orchestra concert on 31 October 1927, in Box MUS/10. Members' friends could attend for a fee of 10 shillings. Friends also had to pay a fee for a seat in the centre of the hall.

<sup>53</sup> Reports Council 1939–45.

<sup>54</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 19v.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 16r.

<sup>56</sup> See letters in the archives, Box RDS/MUS/6 and Box MUS/10, and see also Music Recitals' Index.

performers comprised the greatest expense associated with the recitals. At the higher end, respective fees of 130 guineas, 150 guineas and £160 were requested by pianists Artur [Arthur] Rubinstein (1887–1982), Benno Moiseiwitch (1890–1963) and Gina Bachauer (1913–76). Rather modest fees of 10 guineas and 15 guineas were requested by Charles Lynch (1906–84) and Dina Copeman (1898–1982) respectively.<sup>57</sup> Lynch and Copeman's modest fees may be justified by the fact that in their performances on 5 February and 18 November 1940 neither pianist was performing a full solo recital. Both pianists were engaged in what was described in the programmes as song and piano recitals, in which the programme alternated between selections of accompanied songs and piano solos. The role of accompanist at such recitals was usually taken on by a pianist other than the solo pianist.<sup>58</sup>

Expenses associated with printing varied between £28 9s 6d (1935) and £209 3s (1927).<sup>59</sup> Although not always itemised in the records, printing expenses appear to have included the production of programmes and tickets. Extant programmes for the period 1931–50 are small in format, printed in black ink and consist of one folio or sheet of paper. The works performed at two consecutive recitals are printed on the front and reverse of most extant programmes. On occasions when a large number of works were performed, (this mostly applied to song recitals), the afternoon programme is printed on the front and the evening programme is printed on the reverse.<sup>60</sup> Minutes from the meetings of the general purposes committee frequently record payments to publishers, printers and paper makers Brown(e) and Nolan who had Dublin premises on 41–2 Nassau Street, 28–30 Fenian Street, 35 Boyne Street and also in Belfast.<sup>61</sup> These payments are not always itemised, but several payments to Brown and Nolan in relation to 'music' or 'music programmes' are recorded in the minutes.<sup>62</sup> In 1940 efforts were made to reduce the cost of printing, however during the late 1940s some members endeavoured to have lyrics printed on programmes for song recitals. This practice did not continue on account of the extra printing costs incurred.<sup>63</sup> Advertising costs also varied; the highest amount spent on advertising during the period 1925–50 was £121 5s 2d

<sup>57</sup> See Bachauer, Moiseiwitsch, Rubinstein, Copeman and Lynch in Music Recitals' Index.

<sup>58</sup> Musical Programmes 1931–43, see 5 February 1940 and 18 November 1940.

<sup>59</sup> Printing costs are recorded in the abstract of accounts in the Reports of the Council.

<sup>60</sup> Musical Programmes 1931–43, 1943–48 and 1949–56.

<sup>61</sup> A. Thom, *Thom's Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for the year 1926* (Dublin: 1926).

<sup>62</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 45v–46r, 51v–53r, 58v–59r, 63v–64r, 67v–68r, 71v–72r, 87v–88r, 91v–92r.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 20v, 35r, 37r.

(1934) and the lowest amount was £35 9s 5d (1940).<sup>64</sup> The recitals were regularly advertised in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press*. Decisions about large expenses and the revision of the budget for recitals were made by the Council. The music committee did not have the authority to proceed on such matters.<sup>65</sup>

## Attendance

A comprehensive record of attendance figures was maintained,<sup>66</sup> and the committee carefully analysed figures and compared average attendance for afternoon and evening recitals. The table at Figure 1 illustrates the record of attendance for the period 1925 to 1950.

Comparisons were also made between attendance figures for different types of recitals, for example piano versus string recitals. This allowed the committee to ascertain the most popular types of recitals and the most popular performers. Attendance peaked during the years 1926 to 1928; reasons for these large audiences include the continued high standard of the recitals and the occurrence of special recitals (Hallé Orchestra and St Patrick's Day recitals).<sup>67</sup> The large audiences could also be attributed to the enthusiasm surrounding the opening of the new concert hall in November 1925. In 1929 the number of special recitals was curtailed due to a decrease of 13,351 in attendance figures.<sup>68</sup>

[INSERT FIG 1 HERE, TO GO WITH TEXT IN PRECEDING PARAGRAPH]

*Fig. 1. Audience figures at the Royal Dublin Society Chamber Music Recitals 1925-50*

Audience numbers for 1931, the Society's bicentenary year, show a decrease of 3,602 on the previous year. The occurrence of many commemorative Society events including exhibitions, a garden party and a period ball meant that members had many social demands to

---

<sup>64</sup> Reports Council 1925–50. See also Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 7r–7v, 38r.

<sup>66</sup> See Council Reports for each year and ARC LEC/MAN 1 Attendances at Lectures Recitals etc. Nov. 1943 Records of Recitals and Lectures Period 1/11/1943 to 6/3/1970 – this source documents the attendance and takings for Music Recitals, Afternoon and Evening Lectures, Christmas Lectures, Film Displays, Conference Symposiums, Christmas Juvenile Lectures, Experimental Science Lectures, Science Lectures and Popular Science Lectures for the period 1943–70. For the music recitals there is a clear break down of the following data for each recital documented: number of members, members' friends, members' children and students in attendance; total attendance; the takings for each recital and the total takings for the first and second half of each season of recitals. In this source information pertaining to the music recitals is documented according to each season of recitals, for example 1943/4 season, 1944/5 season etc. In the Reports of the Council information relating to attendance is documented according to the calendar year.

<sup>67</sup> Box MUS/10 Report on chamber music recitals, undated but content indicates post-1926; Report Council 1926, pp. 39–40; 1927, pp. 36, 40–3; 1928, pp. 41, 46–50.

<sup>68</sup> Report Council 1929, p. 42.

fulfil, perhaps accounting to a certain extent for this decrease in recital attendance. The introduction of song recitals to the 1931 programme proved very popular; a total attendance of 2,892 is recorded for afternoon song recitals given by Keith Falkner and John Coates on 9 February and 30 November 1931 respectively.<sup>69</sup>

A decline in attendance was noted at meetings of the general purposes and music committees which took place on 28 January and 11 March 1936 respectively.<sup>70</sup> The following decisions were made in an effort to increase attendance:

“The Resolution of the General Purposes Committee – “That the attention of the Music Committee be drawn to the gradual drop in the attendance at the Music Recitals” was considered. – It was decided that the List of Artists to be selected for the coming session should be laid before the General Purposes Committee for their consideration before any engagement was made.

It was further decided that with a view to enhancing the popularity of the recitals some should be given by artists of world-wide renown, and the remainder by rising artists, including possible local artists, who would be willing to accept honorariums sufficiently low to enable the total expenditure to be kept within the prescribed limit”.<sup>71</sup>

The recommendation of the General Purposes Committee with regard to the attendance at Music Recitals was further considered, and the following resolution was adopted for submission to the Committee:-

The Music Committee have had under consideration the resolution of the General Purposes Committee. They find that recitals by the same Artist have shown a decrease of 40% since 1931, showing that the decrease is not due to intrinsic changes in the programmes. They point out that the engagement of Cortot secured an attendance of 2,593 in comparison with an average for the other recitals of 1,500.

The Music Committee believe that a policy of securing a greater number of artists of high reputation, and balancing their budget by engaging promising musicians, including local artists, whose fees have not reached the highest standard might secure improved results [...].<sup>72</sup>

Performers recommended to give recitals during the 1936/7 season include pianists Arthur Schnabel and John Hunt, the Isolde Menges sextet, the Goossens wind quintet and the

---

<sup>69</sup> Report Council 1931, p. 63.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 85v–86r; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 7r.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes Music 1934–1973, f. 7r.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* Alfred Denis Cortot (1877–1962) French pianist and conductor.

Culwick Choral Society.<sup>73</sup> Performers capable of attracting a large audience as evidenced in RDS Council reports and newspaper reviews include the Italian Trio, Prague String Quartet, Rudolf Serkin, Solomon and Elisabeth Schumann. Repeat performances given by the Italian and Pasquier Trios were also well attended.<sup>74</sup> The appearance of local, Dublin-based artists, for example Rhona Marshall (née Clark), Rosamund Leonard and Arthur Franks, and the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra, also attracted large audiences.<sup>75</sup> Reasons for low attendance in 1928, 1929 and 1940 include bad weather, and an outbreak of influenza at the beginning of the year is thought to have affected attendance figures for 1937.<sup>76</sup> The *Irish Times* critic was of the opinion that the very low attendance for a recital given by viola player William Primrose that year was due to the lack of popularity of the instrument.<sup>77</sup>

Understandably, the outbreak of the Second World War had a noticeable effect on audience numbers for the period 1939–45. The 1938/9 season was unaffected as the outbreak of the war did not occur until 1 September 1939. Agendas for meetings of the music committee which took place on 20 and 27 September 1939, however, were devoted to making provision for this catastrophic event. The following decisions were made;

“The Registrar made a verbal report to the Committee, following the recent meeting of the Council, at which the various sums passed by the Budget in February, had been revised, and of necessity, considerably reduced owing to the European War. He also stressed the uncertainty of some of the artists already engaged being able to fulfil their contracts. At the same time it was the desire of the Council that the full Winter programme should be carried through, engaging substitutes for such artists as were unable to appear.

The Committee unanimously concurred, and it was proposed that an “Emergency Panel” of local artists should be drawn up, for which a number of names were suggested, and this was approved.”<sup>78</sup>

The committee subsequently made contact with agents requesting a revision of performers’ fees, replies were received from agents and performers confirming the fulfilment of

---

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37 newspaper cuttings *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press* 26 January 1932, 31 January 1933, 28 February 1933, 11 December 1934 and 24 November 1936; Box MUS/13 Volume 1937–40 cuttings *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* 18 January 1938; Report Council 1936, p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume 1928–32 newspaper cuttings *Irish Times* 28 January 1930; *Irish Independent* and *Irish Times* 4 November 1930; Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37 newspaper cuttings *Irish Times* and *Irish Press* 17 January 1933; Report Council 1934, p. 44.

<sup>76</sup> Report Council 1937, p. 57.

<sup>77</sup> Box MUS/13 volume 1932–37 newspaper cutting *Irish Times* 26 January 1937; Box MUS/13 Volume 1937–40 newspaper cutting *Irish Press* 24 November 1937; Report Council 1928, p. 48; 1929, p. 42; 1940, p. 52.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 41v, 42v–43r; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 15v.

engagements, and a list of substitute artists was received from agents Ibbs and Tillet.<sup>79</sup>

Despite Ireland's neutrality difficulties were experienced in travelling to Dublin. The music committee had to make provision in this respect. Artists engaged for the 1940/1 season who also required permits to travel to Dublin were cancelled and were replaced by local performers.<sup>80</sup>

## Networks

During the period 1925–50 the organisation and occurrence of the RDS recitals depended largely on the establishment and maintenance of various networks within the industry. The RDS music committee developed links with London-based classical music agents, international performers, instrument dealers, various societies and associations at local, national and international level and with Raidió Éireann. The establishment of a good working relationship with various concert agents increased the possibility of engaging leading performers of the time. Over three hundred letters are extant in the RDS archives between the RDS (registrar) and music agents Ibbs and Tillet; E.A. Michell of Concert Direction; Lionel, Powell and Holt and Philip Ashbrooke of Concert and Touring Direction.<sup>81</sup> The letters date from the 1920s and from the 1949/50 recital season and provide insight into the negotiations which took place between RDS representatives and various music agents and performers regarding fees, programming and timings. The letters also contextualise Dublin and Ireland's significance in terms of planning concert tours. Considering the logistics involved in travelling to Dublin during the period 1925–50, a journey which for the majority of international performers included boat trips and train journeys, many performers were enthusiastic about including the city in their busy concert schedules. Visits to Dublin were often determined by the availability of performers; Dublin was usually included if performers were engaged to visit Belfast or cities in the UK. However fees agreed usually needed to reflect the travel expenses incurred.

Ibbs and Tillet, who during the 1920s had an address at 19 Hanover Square London, appear to have been the Society's main recital agents. The majority of extant letters in the archive were sent between the firm and the RDS registrar Arthur Moran. The Ibbs and Tillet

---

<sup>79</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 16r.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 19r.

<sup>81</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6.

Collection, which includes ledgers, programmes, photographs, contracts and correspondence for the period c1920–70 is extant at the Royal College of Music Library in London.<sup>82</sup> Ibbs and Tillett were concert agents for leading international performers including German soprano Elisabeth Schumann, English violinists Arthur Catterall (1883–1943) and Isolde Menges (1893–1976), English oboist Leon Goossens (1897–1988) and the Hungarian pianist Lili Kraus (1905–86) and violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973).<sup>83</sup> Performers represented by E.A. Michell include Polish-American pianist Artur Rubinstein, French pianist Youra Guller (1895–1980) and British pianist Solomon. The Léner String Quartet and Pirani Trio were represented by Lionel, Powell and Holt, and the Vienna String Quartet and Ukranian pianist Wassily Sapellnikoff (1868–1941) were represented by Philip Ashbrooke.

During the Second World War the Society relied heavily on the participation of local musicians, mainly members of the teaching staff at the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) and various Dublin-based performing groups. These included pianists Dorothy Stokes, Rhona Marshall and Dina Copeman; violinist Arthur Franks; singer Michael O’Higgins; the Dublin String Orchestra under the baton of Terry O’Connor and leader Nancie Lord, and the Dublin Trio whose members were Madge Bradbury on piano, Arthur Franks on violin and Clyde Twelvetees on cello.<sup>84</sup> The average number of recitals given by Irish and/or Dublin-based performers was one recital per season, but the war years were exceptional; during the 1939/40 and 1940/1 seasons, half of the 22 recitals which took place were given by Irish and/or Dublin-based performers. An increase in the participation of international performers is evident from the 1941/2 season onwards. During the 1937/8, 1938/9, 1948/9 and 1949/50 seasons all recitals were given by international performers. Other Irish musicians who had a strong involvement in the RDS recitals were John F. Larchet and Colonel Fitz Brase. Larchet conducted recitals given by the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1925, 1926 and 1927. He was a member of both the Industries, Art and General Purposes Committee and of the music committee, where he was at various times secretary, vice-chairman and chairman.<sup>85</sup> Larchet’s wife, Madeleine was also a member of the music

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibbs and Tillett Collection see <http://www.rcm.ac.uk/library/collections/othercollectionsandhandlists/>. The author has not yet had the opportunity to examine the Collection. Kindest thanks are extended to RCM Librarian Peter Linnitt for providing me with information about the collection, received via email 21 May 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire* (Ashgate: 2009).

<sup>84</sup> Richard Pine and Charles Acton eds., *To Talent Alone: The Royal Irish Academy of Music 1848–1998* (Dublin: 1998), pp. 522–6.

<sup>85</sup> There are numerous references to J.F. Larchet throughout Minutes Music 1934–73 and Reports to Council.



committee and several members of the teaching staff at the RIAM were members of the Society.<sup>86</sup> Colonel Fitz Brase conducted the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra for recitals in 1931, 1932 and 1934; the orchestra was frequently augmented by wind players from the No. 1 Irish Army Band.<sup>87</sup>

Other networks established by the RDS music committee include McCullough and Pigott who were the main suppliers for piano hire to the Society; The Music Association of Ireland; The Performing Rights Society Ltd Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers of Music; The National Federation of Music Clubs U.S.A., and The Gramophone Society. Correspondence between all these societies and the RDS are recorded in both the minutes of the music committee and general purposes committee.<sup>88</sup> The RDS had established a relationship with the national broadcaster by the 1920s; in 1927, 1928 and 1929 arrangements were made to broadcast special St Patrick's Day recitals on the 2 R.N. radio station.<sup>89</sup> During the 1920s performers were not permitted to appear in Dublin or its suburbs at any public concert or function within a fortnight before or after the date of the intended recital. This clause was written into contracts extant in the collection for recitals which were planned to take place between 1 November 1926 and 27 February 1928.<sup>90</sup> At the meeting of the music committee which took place on 20 December 1933 it was proposed that the contracts with performers should be revised to include broadcasting.<sup>91</sup> This proposal does not appear to have passed and on the 25 September 1940 it was confirmed that broadcasting was not approved after a request was made to the music committee.<sup>92</sup> In January 1944 the Council made the following decision:

“The Executive Committee is clearly of opinion that artists or lecturers should not be allowed to broadcast in Raidió Éireann within a fortnight before or after the date of their recital or lecture”.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> RDS Membership lists for the years 1925, 1927, 1929–31, 1936, 1941–42, 1946 and 1950.

<sup>87</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 74v–75r; Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 25r; 1934–73, ff. 1r, 2v, 3r; Report Council 1929, p. 44; 1930, p. 60; 1931, p. 63.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 110v–111r; Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 26r, 27r, 39v; 1934–73, ff. 3r, 4r, 6v, 14v, 19v, 39r.

<sup>89</sup> Report Council 1927, p. 43; 1928, p. 48; 1929, p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 Contracts/Proposals for recitals scheduled to take place between 1 November 1926 and 27 February 1928.

<sup>91</sup> Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 18v–19r.

<sup>92</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 19v.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 124v–125r. See Meeting dated 4 April 1944.

Between the years 1946 and 1950 the saga concerning broadcasting RDS recitals continued. After a proposal for broadcasting was submitted by Sir John Keane the Council issued the following statement;

“With regard to requests received from time to time for permission that Artists and Lecturers engaged by the Society should be granted Permission to broadcast during their visit to Dublin, the following ruling of the Executive Committee was unanimously approved and confirmed:

The Executive Committee is clearly of opinion that artists or lecturers should not be allowed to broadcast in Raidió Éireann within a fortnight before or after the date of their recital or lecture”.<sup>94</sup>

In 1947, following a request from Aloys Fleischmann (1910–92), the RDS approved the broadcasting from Raidió Éireann of provincial recitals by performers within a fortnight following their appearance at Ballsbridge. This decision was made by the Council and music committee to assist in the promotion of music education throughout the country.<sup>95</sup>

Subsequently, in May 1950 a request by L. O’Broin and the Raidió Éireann Symphony Orchestra to give two recitals for broadcast was declined without further reference to the Council.<sup>96</sup>

### **Repertoire and Extant Sources**

The repertoire performed at the RDS chamber music recitals included selections of sonatas, quartets, trios, concerti, overtures, symphonies, studies, waltzes, ballades, nocturnes and songs by composers including Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Wagner. Works by contemporary composers including Frank Bridge, Manuel de Falla, Vaughan Williams, Paul Hindemith and Arnold Bax were also regularly listed in programmes. Arrangements by performers and some of their own compositions were included in programmes by pianist Kathleen Long, viola player Lionel Tertis, pianist and composer Joan Trimble, and pianist and composer Ernő Dohnányi.<sup>97</sup> Song recitals, which were introduced during the 1930/1 season, featured

---

<sup>94</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 31r.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 136v–137r; Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 32v, 33v.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 40v. Other references to the terms and conditions for broadcasting RDS recitals are recorded in the following letters between Ibbs and Tillett and Horace Poole of the RDS, see Box RDS/MUS/6 letters dated 11, 15 and 18 August 1949.

<sup>97</sup> Programmes included: 5 December 1938, arrangement of Bach’s Choral Prelude ‘*Wer nur der lieben Gott Lasst Wollten*’ by Kathleen Long; 6 November 1942, arrangement of Schumann’s *Fugue No. 5 on B.A.C.H.* by Joan Trimble. Several arrangements by viola player Lionel Tertis are included in his performances; see programmes for 26 November 1934, 2 February 1942 and 8 February 1943; arrangements include sonatas by Ireland and Delius, Old Irish Air, Andante by Rachmaninoff and Valse by Kreisler. Programmes for piano

numerous arrangements.<sup>98</sup> Works with an Irish flavour were also regularly featured in programmes, as were compositions and arrangements by contemporary Irish composers; Charles Stanford, John Larchet, Herbert Hughes and Hamilton Harty.<sup>99</sup> First Dublin and Irish performances listed in extant programmes include Ernest J. Moeran's *String Quartet in A*, John Ireland's *Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor*, two movements from Glazunov's *Les Ruses d'amour* (Introduction and Peasant's Dance) and Poulenc's *Metamorphoses (Reine des Mouettes, C'est ainsi que tu es and Paganini)*. These performances took place in 1931, 1933, 1935 and 1945 and were given by the International String Quartet; Rosamund Leonard, Arthur Franks and Dorothy Stokes; The Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra and Astra Desmond respectively.<sup>100</sup> Themed programmes include Beethoven recitals given by pianist Denis Matthews on 10 December 1945, and by duo James Whitehead and Harry Isaacs on cello and piano on 9 December 1946. A Chopin recital was performed by pianist Jan Smeterlin at the evening recital on 4 November 1946.<sup>101</sup>

Special recitals which fell outside the regular chamber music recital season and which represented alternative programmes for RDS audiences include the St Patrick's Day recitals on the national holiday from 1927 to 1929, a special performance of Handel's *Messiah* on 19 December 1934 in the RDS Main Hall, and band promenades which took place between 1941 and 1943.<sup>102</sup> The St Patrick's Day recitals were established to promote 'native music in its

---

recitals by Joan and Valerie Trimble include Joan Trimble's *Sonatina, The Green Bough* and *The Bard of Lisgoold*, (8 December 1941 and 16 November 1942). The programme for Dohnányi's recital of 3 November 1947 includes his works *Suite in the olden style Op. 24, Pastoral, e Hungarian Christmas Song [sic], Capriccio in A minor Op. 23* and *Six piano pieces, Op. 41*.

<sup>98</sup> The first song recitals (afternoon and evening) were given by Keith Falkner on 9 February 1931, see Report Council 1931, p. 63, and Box MUS/13 Volume 1928–32 newspaper cuttings *Irish Independent* 10 February 1931 and *Irish Independent* and *Irish Times* dated 17 February 1931. The *Irish Independent* review states: "For the first time, I think, in the history of the Royal Dublin Society, a vocalist was admitted to appear at one of the Monday classical recitals. Although one cannot classify a vocal recital as "chamber music", I see no objection to this concession to a popular demand. The Committee, however, will need to exercise care in the choice of singers, in order to avoid degenerating into a sort of entertainment bureau."

<sup>99</sup> For works by Stanford see programmes for 6 November 1933, 21 January 1935, 10 February 1936, 7 December 1936, 8 February 1937, 25 November 1940, 17 February 1941, 1 December 1941. For works by Larchet see programmes for 6 November 1933, 18 November 1940, 17 February 1941 and 21 January 1946. For works by Hughes see programmes for 6 November 1933 (this was a lecture recital given by Herbert Hughes and James McCafferty), 21 January 1935, 3 February 1941, 15 November 1943, 21 January 1946, 21 November 1949. For works by Harty see programmes for 6 November 1933, 18 February 1935, 20 January 1936, 18 November 1940, 13 January 1941, 18 January 1943 and 21 November 1949. Three Nocturnes by John Field (1782–1837) are included in the extant programme for the evening recital by Denis Mathews scheduled for 10 December 1945. This is the only occasion on which works by Field are listed in extant RDS recital programmes for the period 1925–50.

<sup>100</sup> Musical Programmes 1931–43; 14 December 1931, 16 January 1933 and 4 February 1935; Musical Programmes 1943–48; 12 February 1945.

<sup>101</sup> Musical Programmes 1943–48.

<sup>102</sup> Report Council 1927, p. 42; 1928, p. 41; 1929, p. 37; 1934, pp. 8, 53–4; 1941, pp. 9, 48; 1942, pp. 11, 54; 1943, pp. 9, 48.

broadest sense' and an extant programme for the 1927 afternoon and evening recitals includes songs, orchestral works and solos by Harty, Stanford, Larchet, Percy Grainger, Vincent O' Brien and Herbert Hughes.<sup>103</sup> The *Messiah* performance was organised to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Handel's birth, and as part of a scheme of assistance, which also included two orchestral recitals, offered to the Dublin Philharmonic Society, which was experiencing difficulties at this time due to the closure of the Theatre Royal. The oratorio was performed in full by the Dublin Philharmonic Society Choir and Dublin Symphony Orchestra. The choir was augmented by the participation of 250 RDS members, the orchestra included woodwind and string players from the No. 1 Army Band and the work was conducted by Turner Huggard. A detailed description of the performance, which was attended by an audience exceeding 5,000, was published in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press*, and copies of the souvenir programme for this performance of *Messiah* are extant in the RDS archives.<sup>104</sup> A series of band promenades was established in 1941 and continued until 1943. The No. 1 Army Band was engaged to give four recitals of light classical music in the Tea Gardens at the Grand Enclosure during the summer months. The public were admitted on payment of a small fee which contributed between £10 2s and £27 4s 3d to income received from musical recitals during this three year period (1941–43). A drop in total attendance for all four recitals from 2,034 in 1941 to 943 in 1943 caused this series to cease. Programmes for band promenades were submitted to the music committee for approval in advance of recitals.<sup>105</sup>

The RDS and its Library and Archives should forever be indebted to former music committee member Edith Boxwell, who diligently collected and collated three volumes of programmes for the majority of recitals which took place between 1931 and 1956. The majority of these programmes bear autographs signed by performers, and she also collected photographs of various performers which complement the programmes. These volumes provide not only a

<sup>103</sup> Report Council 1927, p. 42; Box RDS/MUS/6 Transcription of programme cover: "Royal Dublin Society / ST. PATRICK'S DAY / 1927 / Orchestral and Vocal Recitals of / Irish Music / PROGRAMMES" Note transcribed from inside front cover: "In these programmes the Authors, Composers, and Artistes are all of Irish birth or parentage".

<sup>104</sup> Report Council 1934, pp. 8, 53–4; Minutes, Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 74v–75r, 78v–79r; Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 22v, 24v; Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 1r, 2v; Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37 newspaper cuttings *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press* dated 12, 15 and 20 December 1934; Box RDS/MUS/6 Five copies of a souvenir programme of Handel's *Messiah*. Transcription of cover: "Royal Dublin Society / SOUVENIR PROGRAMME / of Handel's / 'MESSIAH' / BY THE / DUBLIN PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY / CONDUCTOR: TURNER HUGGARD. 6[D. / In the MAIN HALL BALL'S BRIDGE, on WEDNESDAY, 19th DECEMBER, 1934". A performance of *Messiah* was also planned for 1942, see Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 21r.

<sup>105</sup> Report Council 1941, pp. 9, 48; 1942, pp. 11, 54; 1943, pp. 9, 48; Minutes Industries, Art and General Purposes, ff. 115v–116r, 120v–122r; Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 23v–24r.

valuable resource when researching the repertoire performed at the RDS classical music recitals, but also an interesting social history of these occasions. Boxwell recorded notes about each recital she attended and also records when she was absent. Edith Boxwell was also a pianist; she performed Beethoven's *Piano concerto in E flat major* as soloist with the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra at an RDS recital in 1931, and was a piano teacher at the RIAM from 1898–1925.<sup>106</sup>

[INSERT FIG 2 HERE]

*Fig. 2 Programme for recital given by Lili Kraus dated Monday 27 November 1950.*

*Image courtesy of the RDS Library and Archives.*

Approximately five hundred volumes of printed sheet music, some of which date from the late nineteenth century, are extant in the RDS Library and Archives. Works include selections of trios and quartets by Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Cherubini, Dvorak, Huber, Goldmark, Esposito, Arensky and Fauré.<sup>107</sup> It is not clear if this music was purchased by the music committee for use by performers or if it was intended for reference only by RDS members who may have wished to familiarise themselves with works before attending recitals. A preliminary cross-referencing survey reveals that some sheet music present in the archive corresponds with works listed in extant programmes.<sup>108</sup> Some parts bear annotations and performance instructions which have been added in pencil, suggesting that the parts were used. It is possible that performers may have donated their music to the RDS after recitals had taken place. The minutes record that in April 1935 the music committee received music from the National Federation of Music Clubs.<sup>109</sup> In 1955 the committee made the decision to subscribe to a new series of collected works by Mozart and Bach, and the minutes note that these were not intended for borrowing, but for reference only in the library. Also in 1955, it was decided that each member of the music committee should draw up a list of chamber

<sup>106</sup> Musical Programmes 1931–43, 1943–48 and 1949–56. For the recital featuring Edith Boxwell as soloist see programme for 2 November 1931, and Pine and Acton, op.cit., p. 526.

<sup>107</sup> All printed sheet music is in the process of being re-catalogued.

<sup>108</sup> For example, parts for Brahms Op.87 and Op. 101 are extant in the printed music collection; these works are listed in the following programmes; Italian Trio 23 January 1933 (Op. 87) and 22 January 1934 (Op. 101); Budapest Trio (Op. 101) 11 November 1935; Pougnet-Morrison-Pini Trio (Op. 87) 28 November 1938; The Dublin Trio (Op. 101) 19 January 1942; The Harry Isaacs Trio (Op. 87) 9 November 1942.

<sup>109</sup> Minutes Music 1931–39, f. 27v.

music scores of works composed since 1900 which the committee might consider purchasing for the music society's library.<sup>110</sup>

## Reception

Examination of three volumes of newspaper cuttings demonstrates that the RDS recitals were well advertised and publicised during the period 1928–40.<sup>111</sup> Previews and reviews were published in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press*. Harold R. White was the music critic for the *Irish Independent*; other music critics wrote under pseudonyms, for example Obligato for the *Irish Times*. Music critics for the *Irish Press* are identifiable only by the initials printed at the end of articles.<sup>112</sup> Opinions expressed by music critics varied; there was a general preference for programmes of 'classic' or more traditional works in the classical genre, however modern works were commended if not always understood or enjoyed. Works, performers and interpretations were critiqued. Reviews not only expressed the personal opinions of the various music critics but also captured general feelings expressed by the audience. The following excerpt is taken from a review of the first Dublin performance of John Ireland's *Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano* published in the *Irish Press*:

“The Recital concluded with John Ireland's Second violin and piano Sonata, given for the first time in Dublin. It was an artistic performance. The performers were at one as to the interpretation and the work was played with understanding and poetical feeling”.<sup>113</sup>

Some performers were undoubtedly more popular than others, as reflected by the large audience in attendance at two recitals given on 24 February 1936 by pianist Cortot. The *Irish Times* describes the attendance on this occasion as the largest of the season recording an attendance of 1,300 in the afternoon and 1,600 for the evening recital. This was also the closing recital of the 1935/6 season.<sup>114</sup> Song recitals were extremely popular from their establishment during the 1930/1 season until 1950; average attendance never dropped below

---

<sup>110</sup> Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 50v–51v, 53r–53v.

<sup>111</sup> Box MUS/13 see contents Volume 1928–32, Volume 1932–37, Volume 1937–40. All three volumes contain press-cuttings and advertisements for RDS recitals and lectures.

<sup>112</sup> G.O'B., E.O'B., L.C., L.P., P.T., L.O'C.

<sup>113</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37 newspaper cutting *Irish Press* 17 January 1933, critic identified by initials BO'B printed at the end of the article.

<sup>114</sup> Box MUS/13 Volume 1932–37 newspaper cuttings *Irish Times*, *Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* 25 February 1936; Report Council 1936, p. 50; Minutes Music 1934–73, f. 7v.

606 during that twenty year period.<sup>115</sup> In letters exchanged between Denis Donohue, music critic with *The Leader*, and RDS Registrar Dr Horace Poole, it was confirmed that the RDS had no list of critics as the recitals were not for the public, but for members and a limited number of friends. Poole also confirmed that an unspecified number of complimentary tickets were sent to the daily papers.<sup>116</sup> The conduct of the audience at RDS recitals was also subject to criticism in newspaper reviews. The music committee often received letters from various members of the Society wishing to show their appreciation of the high standard of the recital series and the enjoyment members derived from attending.<sup>117</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The RDS recitals which took place between 1925 and 1950 were successful mainly due to the hard work and dedication of members of the Society's music committee. The aim of the recitals was to expose Dublin audiences to the music of the 'great composers'. This was certainly achieved through the dedication and objectivity of the Society's music committee which was willing to promote works by both classical and modern day composers. Recital programmes were varied and were performed by both leading international performers and Dublin-based musicians. A testament to the recitals and their organisers is the calibre of performers engaged and the number of returning performers whose names are evident in extant sources. The recitals endured the rigours of the Second World War and retained a high standard of performance, despite decreases in audience attendance and budget constraints. The intricacies involved in concert planning at the main concert venue in early twentieth-century Dublin are evident, as are the national and international networks established by the RDS music committee. The RDS concert archive documents 120 years of musical activity in the city (1886–2006) and its study contributes to knowledge of musical activity in early twentieth-century Dublin. The RDS Concert Hall, as it is now known, celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research project was kindly and generously funded by the RDS Library and Archives.

## **Abstract**

---

<sup>115</sup> Average attendances are recorded in Reports of the Council for the period 1931–50.

<sup>116</sup> Box RDS/MUS/6 letters dated 14 and 29 October 1949.

<sup>117</sup> Minutes Music 1931–39, ff. 40v–41r; Minutes Music 1934–73, ff. 12r, 15r, 22v.

This article documents the occurrence, organisation and management of the Royal Dublin Society classical music recitals which took place between 1925 and 1950. Networks, repertoire and reception are examined and analysed.

*Triona O'Hanlon is a violinist and musicologist. She is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the School of Creative Arts (Music), Queen's University Belfast for 2015–2017. Triona has held research fellowships at Marsh's Library, Dublin (2014) and at The Royal Dublin Society (2015). She is a RISM Ireland Associate and a Research Associate of the Research Foundation for Music in Ireland.*